CHINESE CONVERGED ON B.C. GOLDFIELDS

The articles in this continuing series are taken from the files of The British Colonist, founded by Amor de Cosmos more than a century ago, and still publishing as The Daily Colonist. They have an historical significance, for they reflect something of the thinking of the times, when Vancouver's Island and British Columbia were separate colonies and The British Colonist was waging an unrelenting war for reform against Governor James Douglas.

PAGES of the PAST

RIGHT among the first of the prospectors who adventured into the little-known upper country of British Columbia, were the Chinese. Many of them had had experience in the California goldfields. Most of them were from Canton and its hinterland of Kwangtung Province. Few of them had ever experienced anything more severe in the way of weather than the frosts of the country the Forty-Niners searched. But they had the same burning fever which brought all sorts and conditions of men from the ends of the earth to hunt gold on the Fraser, the Quesnel and the Horsefly.

As a matter of fact, Chinese were still working the Fraser flats—and some of them stayed on Vancouver Island diggings in the Leech River country until very recent years—long after the white miners had quit the game.

In any event, on April 10, 1860, The British Colonist reported the arrival of 140 Chinese passengers in two vessels from San Francisco, the Panama and the D. L. Clinch. They were on their way to the Fraser mines.

"Yesterday they were around town purchasing copper and other necessities to take to the mines, for which they will leave today.

"At the rate they are going up the Fraser they will soon outnumber the whites."

That year there were enthusiastic reports from the upper country. From what was then known officially as the Quesnelle River, but familiarly as the Canal, about 50 miles above its confluence with the Fraser, there were exceptionally rich workings.

An outfit named Dancing Bill's Company was taking $75 to $110 a day by rocker.

"Then there is Patterson's company, Wait's company, a company of Frenchmen and a company of Irishmen and several others who have claims (in this area) that yield from $27 to $75 a day. These are facts, not humbug," The British Colonist's correspondent related.

Men were tramping the banks of the East or Muddy Fork of the Quesnel, and the South Fork, or Horsefly, desperately seeking a location and a chance to discover their own bonanzas as the river level subsided.

★ ★ ★

BUT IN THE MEANTIME, Amor de Cosmos had not forgotten his fued with James Douglas, nor his contempt for the man who had defeated him at the last election for the legislative assembly. That man was Selim Franklin, over whom there was so much fuss about his oath—because he was not a Christian. Franklin, of course, was a Douglas supporter.

When the government of British Columbia announced the sale of reserved lots in New Westminster, Douglas made one of those moves which gave his antagonists grounds for attacking him as a despot, although the chances are his action was taken in all innocence.

What had happened? Col. Richard Moody, of the Royal Engineers, a highly-respected officer who had been named deputy governor of British Columbia, had appointed one of his subordinates at New Westminster to take charge of the auction.

But who should arrive with the governor's warrant on auction-day but Selim Franklin, member of the legislative assembly from Victoria, and not even a citizen of British Columbia, let alone New Westminster.

This was an outrage, according to the New Westminster citizens. They were already indignant that their colony was governed from Victoria, and the fact that Franklin was a member of the rival colony's government made the appointment more unpopular.

That Franklin was a professional auctioneer only added to the citizens' suspicions.

Moreover, there were among the auction audience, ready to bid, presumably, some of the detested officials who, while their responsibilities were in British Columbia, continued to make their comfortable homes in Victoria.

The crowd simply howled down the auctioneer.

He tried for half an hour, but he couldn't make a sale.

After Franklin had departed, there were massing meetings, repeated cheers for Colonel Moody—whom citizens considered had been insulted—and refusal to tolerate lot sales except under B.C. jurisdiction.

AVIATOR by ACCIDENT

(Continued From Page 2)

spun in from 200 feet. All three men were killed. In the days that followed, the same aircraft killed five more pilots. There was something wrong with the fuel system on the port engine. It frequently cut out and the aircraft went straight into a spin. De Havilland have made many excellent aircraft, but the DH10 was one of its failures.

In 1925 the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy was formed and about 35 naval and Royal Marine officers were sent to No. 1 Flying Training School of the RAF at Netherhaven.

Capt. Burbidge was at that time a flight commander at that station, and this first course was sent to his flight. Among these were Sub-Lieutenant John, the son of Sir Augustus John the great artist, and Lieutenant Abel Smith, now both vice-admirals. Smith later took command of the Queen's yacht.

At that time the custom was for the flight commander to instruct one pupil himself; and all other instructors handed their pupils to the flight commanders to test and send on their first solo flights.

It was here that Capt. Burbidge had a student crash on landing, on his first solo—the only one, of all the hundreds that he sent on their first solo, who ever did such a thing. And, as it happened, he was Capt. Burbidge's own pupil. However, he went solo again within 15 minutes and eventually did well and received his wings.

Capt. Burbidge's trick for bolstering the confidence of a particularly nervous student was to remove the stick from the instructor's position and ride with the student, allowing him full control but providing moral support, before he went solo.

In 1928 Capt. Burbidge transferred to the reserve of officers, and took his civilian pilot's license. Jimmy Bell, who had been in the same squadron with Capt. Burbidge in France (now manager of the Edmonton airport) wrote asking him to take "Wop" May's place as chief instructor of the Edmonton Flying Club. Maurice Burbidge went to see Thomas Cowley (then RCAF liaison officer at air minstry, later an air vice-marshal and director of civil aviation). At his request Capt. Burbidge came to Canada.

"When he told me I would have to undergo tests again for my Canadian license, I said I would sooner not bother. I started to walk out of the office, but Tom Cowley called me back. He said he would see that I received a Canadian license. It was the only one, to my knowledge, issued in lieu of a British license.

"Arriving at Edmonton, I stayed at the old Corona Hotel. I knew so little of Canadian customs that I put my shoes outside the door to be polished, after the English fashion.

"Next day, I complained to the manager that the shoes hadn't been polished. 'Huh!' he said, 'You're blankety-blank lucky they weren't stolen.'

"The day I arrived at Edmonton airport, a warmish morning in March when the temperature was 10 degrees below zero, I was horrified to find "Wop" May warming up the sump of an Avro Avian with a blow-torch.

"'Aren't you afraid of setting it on fire?' I asked.

'Hell, no,' he said. 'We shave with these things out here.'

From 1929 to 1940 Capt. Burbidge was chief instructor at Edmonton Flying Club. He sandwiched a few other activities into those years as well.

Commercial Airways didn't have enough experienced pilots. They asked Capt. Burbidge to help out with their first air mail flight from Edmonton to the Arctic Ocean.

And so, in December, 1931, he was one of the pilots who took the first airmail from Edmonton to Fort McMurray, Chippewyan, Fort Smith, Fort Resolution and Aklavik, down the Mackenzie River.

"I was so green in northern winter flying that I wore an ordinary pair of riding breeks, golf stockings and a leather coat. The cockpit heater wouldn't work properly. When I got out of the Lockheed Vega at Fort McMurray, I was so cold that I couldn't walk. I collapsed on my knees."

From 1940 to 1942 he was chief instructor at No. 16 Elementary Flying Training School, which took over Edmonton Flying Club; and in 1942 I went to Lethbridge as airport manager.

A year later, he and Harry Hayter went to Costa Rica to join the staff of TACA (Transportes Aerios Centralano Americano). He was operations manager of the Nicaragua-Panama section. He remained with the company until it was sold to Howard Hughes of Trans World Airlines. Since that time Capt. Burbidge has been living in semi-retirement in Victoria.

Of all the students he personally taught to fly, nobody has been killed or injured in training. His most frightening experience as an instructor was the occasion when a student froze to the controls when Capt. Burbidge was teaching him to come out of a spin.

By the time the instructor had wrested the controls from him, they were down to 100 feet; and as they pulled out, they actually hit the top of a hedge and carried some foliage away.

Capt. Burbridge's brother John, was wounded in action with the infantry, on his 18th birthday. Later, he transferred to the Royal Flying Corps, Maurice Burbidge taught his brother to fly.

John Burbidge later became a fighter pilot. He now lives at Ardmore. Another brother, Churchill, was killed in action in 1914-18.

Mrs. Burbidge was born in Winnipeg of English parents. She went to England to school, and stayed there when war broke out.

Capt. Burbidge's two sisters, Sybil and Lesley, live with them in a big rambling rouse on spacious grounds at Colwood.

Six years ago, Capt. Burbidge accepted a "temporary" post as a master at St. Michael's School. He stayed there for six years, and retired recently because he developed an allergy to chalk dust.

When he can be persuaded to reminisce, he talks with an air of amused detachment, as though his life had been one long, cheerful escapade.

He remembers the air displays when the French air force put on such a poor performance of aerobatics that the RAF was ordered to make their performance a little sloppier, so as not to show them up; the time a man came in for a swish-tail landing during a display of "crazy flying," misjudged and wiped off his undercarriage right in front of the box where King George V sat. The pilot climbed from his plane unhurt, saluted the king, and walked away.

Capt. Burbidge tells how he flew his unarmed training aircraft near a German bombing zepplin that was drifting with engines stopped in the searchlights over Hull. He saw the gunners swinging the machine-guns around, looking for him in the darkness. They could hear him, but couldn't see him.

"I wished I had had a shotgun, or something," Capt. Burbidge says with a grin.